(b) Qazigund-Kakapore and Rajwansher-Baramulla.	—	2007-08.

Gauge conversion in Himachal Pradesh

3174. SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the criteria for taking up railway lines and gauge conversion works;

(b) the cases of deviations, if any, with reasons therefor;

(c) the reasons for regional imbalance in the matter of allocation of funds and taking up projects particularly those of gauge conversion;

(d) whether narrow gauge lines yet to be converted in broad gauge lines in Himachal Pradesh; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to remove the regional imbalance in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) As per the policy enunciated by the National Transport Policy Committee (1980), new line projects are taken up as project oriented lines, missing links, lines required for strategic reasons and lines for establishment of new growth centers or giving access to remote areas. In addition, gauge conversion of existing Metre Gauge (MG)/Narrow Gauge (NG) lines to Broad Gauge (BG) are taken up under Project Unigauge from 1992 to develop alternative BG routes, establish new BG links, minimize transhipment points and establish connection to ports, industrial centers and those required on strategic considerations. A number of projects have been taken up on socio-economic consideration to provide access to backward, under-developed, hilly and remote areas.

(c) and (e) There has been no such regional imbalance. Further, the funds are being allocated as per State-wise formula.

(d) Yes, Sir. There has been demand for conversion of narrow gauge line from Pathankot to Joginder Nagar in Himachal Pradesh for which an updating survey has been completed. The cost of gauge conversion of this 189.5 kms long line has been assessed as Rs. 1316.16 crore. The project could not be taken up in view of unremunerative nature, large throwforward of projects and constraint of resources.